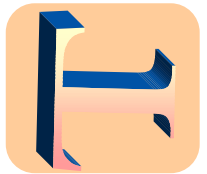
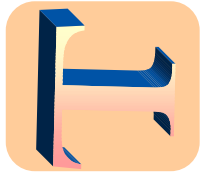




# September 2003



For US Civilian Employees and Their Supervisors  
<http://www.ramstein.af.mil/86mss/cpo>



## ⌘ In This Issue ⌘



Message From The Civilian Personnel Officer 3

### US Affirmative Employment



Personnel Changes To The Affirmative Employment Team 4

Affirmative Employment Customer Service Hours 4

Am I An “External” Or An “Internal” Employee? 4

Self-Nominating: Current Air Force Employees 5



Civilian Employment Planning and Advance Recruitment 5

Equal Employment Opportunity 6



Special Emphasis Program (SEP) 6

Virtual Career Brief 6



2-Year Limit on Temporary Positions 7

Electronic Official Personnel Folders 8

Printing Copy of SF50, Notification of Personnel Action	9
---	---

## **Employee / Management Relations**

Alternate Dispute Resolution	10
Emergency Data Systems (EMDS) for Next of Kin (NOK)	10
FSA – Flexible Spending Account	11
Government Charge Card Disciplinary Action Policy for Civilian Employees	12
Home Leave	13
Mandatory Performance Feedback	14
Civilian Records Retention in Support of Class Action Lawsuit	15
How to Submit Elections to Make Regular TSP Contributions	16
TSP “Catch-up” Contributions	17
Use or Lose Leave	18

## **Classification**

Certifying Position Description Accuracy	19
--	----

## *Personnel points to ponder-*

Coming here from The Last Frontier – Elmendorf AK, which I thoroughly enjoyed, it is easy for me to say it is great to be back in Germany! Like many in Europe, my previous tour helped me transition but there is so much going on, changed, and changing. Since my arrival at Ramstein AB 30 May, I definitely have felt the accelerated pace on this return tour. It has been nonstop and everywhere I look, I see people who are also going nonstop. Now that the initial shock of in-processing, settling in at home and the office is wearing off, I hope for a little time to just breath and think about what would be good for Ramstein AB and our many geographically separated units my office has the privilege of serving. This is where you come in—I need feedback!

Fall is in the air, I've gotten settled in, now is a good time to look at our program to see what strengths we have and challenges my office is facing. There are simple things that make an organization be world-class in customer service and we will continue to strive to go that one step further. One of those areas which come up time and time again is improving our communication options with the customer. Whether you are a manager, supervisor, or employee, have you found yourself either overwhelmed with information you don't even want or cannot seem to find anything on the topic you desperately need to know about? We are committed to provide our sometimes-confusing civilian personnel "rules" in as simple of terms as possible but I need you to help me out—I need feedback!

Initiative is another important key to expanding the possibilities and finding solutions. I encourage everyone to learn as much as they can about the employment system to help take charge of their own career path. If you are a supervisor, you owe it to your employees to help in their professional development as well. We encourage our military supervisors of our civilian employees to take advantage of the opportunities and different forums available to learn how things are done so the workplace may be an environment of growth for the mind, body and spirit. Improving our communication venues will not help anyone unless you take the time --to read Key Manager E-mails and newsletters (we publish both a US and a Local National employment newsletter covering many topics of civilian personnel processes and procedures), attend the Civilian Personnel Managers Course or other training courses available, participate in the process, etc. --I need feedback!

I really like sending our newsletter electronically; this enables us to provide extensive information quickly to all the locations we service throughout Europe, Africa, and the Middle East. I realize some of our employees do not have electronic access to either this newsletter or our website, but supervisors and co-workers should take on as their responsibility to provide information to those who lack the electronic access.

If you have any suggestions for improving this newsletter or requests for future articles, please send us an e-mail to [86MSS.DPC@ramstein.af.mil](mailto:86MSS.DPC@ramstein.af.mil) to give us your thoughts. My door is always open and I welcome calls, visits, and e-mails letting me know we are doing well or where we need to make improvements—I need feedback!

Thanks for your support! Until next time...

*//Signed//*

MARCIA H. MILLER, Civilian Personnel Officer, Ramstein AB Germany

# **US Affirmative Employment**

## **Personnel Changes to the Affirmative Employment Team**

As always, there have been a few personnel changes to the US Affirmative Employment Section since our last Newsletter. Ms. Judy Gautier joined us from the Regional Personnel Center (RPC) at Sembach in May. Ms. Trish Cronin replaced Ms. Edna Cole who was selected for a promotion to the Regional Personnel Center at Sembach. Ms. Laura Young, who recently joined us from HQ USAFE/DPC, will be with us for approximately 6 months. Ms. Sheila Mitchell recently joined us as our new Customer Service Counter Representative in June. If you have questions for your Affirmative Employment Team, please call 480-7055.

## **Affirmative Employment Customer Service Hours**

In March 03, the Customer Service (Employment) Office, Room 125, changed its hours to 0800-1600 daily. Customer service representatives can answer your employment related questions and other general questions.

The Affirmative Employment Staffing Specialist/Assistants do not begin taking phone calls or walk-in customers until 1200 daily. This allows them uninterrupted time to rate the large volume of applications received, prepare and issue timely referral certificates, and process all the necessary paperwork to ensure various personnel actions are processed in a timely manner.

Individuals who show up before 1200 should go to the Customer Service Office. If the representative is unable to answer your question, he/she will take a message for the Staffing Specialist/Assistant to contact you. If there is an urgent matter, you will be referred to the Section Chief for immediate assistance. We appreciate your continued support.

## **Am I an "External" or an "Internal" Employee?**

This distinction is important, especially if you are interested in applying for positions. You are considered "internal" if you occupy a PERMANENT position serviced by the Ramstein Civilian Personnel Flight. An "internal" employee may be on a competitive service (e.g., career or career conditional) or excepted service (e.g., family member) appointment. It is important for excepted service family member employees to understand that they are "internal" candidates while in USAFE; however, they cannot apply and be considered for other Air Force positions outside of USAFE. Internal candidates **SHOULD NOT** submit a resume' when self-nominating for positions in USAFE (see self-nominating article below).

An "external" candidate is any individual not currently on a PERMANENT appointment with the Air Force or serviced by the Ramstein Civilian Personnel Flight (e.g., temporary employees, Army employees, NAF/AAFES employees). External candidates must apply for positions at the Customer Service Counter, Ramstein Civilian Personnel Flight, Building 2120, Room 125. New announcements are posted every Friday, closing date on Thursdays.

For announcements that have been expanded to candidates beyond the commuting area (e.g., DoD or Federal-wide), go to <http://www.usajobs.opm.gov>. Since these announcements are handled by the Regional Personnel Center at Sembach, the announcement will direct you to forward your application and related documents directly to them.

## **Self-Nominating: Current Air Force Employees**

Under the Modern Defense Civilian Data System (DCPDS) and the Standard Automated Inventory Referral System (STAIRS), current permanent Air Force employees must self-nominate to receive consideration for Air Force positions. RESUMES ARE NOT REQUIRED AND MAY CREATE PROBLEMS IN THE SELF-NOMINATION PROCESS IF ENTERED INTO THE SYSTEM. All internal Air Force vacancies will be posted on the HQ AFPC Civilian Employment Home Page, and the Interactive Voice Response System (IVRS) Job Line each Friday -- closing date on Thursdays. Internal candidates must view job announcements and self-nominate before the closing date of the vacancy announcement. Applicants can also subscribe to the Civilian Announcement and Notification System (CANS). CANS will notify each registrant via email of any job announcement that meets specified criteria.

Internal employees may self-nominate for employment consideration for USAFE vacancies by:

- Calling the HQ AFPC IVRS (from Germany) at 00-800-1997-2378, or
- Accessing the HQ AFPC Civilian Home Page at:  
<http://www.afpc.randolph.af.mil/resweb/>

## **Civilian Personnel Online**

Air Force civilians can now easily find links and descriptions of civilian customer self-service and online resources. This web page is designed to give civilian employees and job seekers a 'one-stop' shopping list of the informational pages and web applications available for their use. Visit the web site at <http://www.afpc.randolph.af.mil/dpc/civpersonline.htm> for more information.

## **Civilian Employment Planning and Advance Recruitment**

Supervisors of civilian employees should always be engaged in "employment planning". This is easy to do for civilians because each has an established rotation date -- either the 3-year or 5-year date for non-family member civilians or the sponsor's DEROS date for family members. If you have been through the recruitment process recently, you know recruitment can take quite some time -- even local recruitments can take up to 90 days. To reduce the potential lapse rate and ensure coverage in civilian positions, we must take a proactive approach for filling US civilian positions. As soon as you anticipate a civilian vacancy, whether part of the normal rotation (DEROS) or otherwise, contact your servicing human

resources specialist immediately. We will begin the recruitment process immediately. For civilians that have an established DEROS, we will notify you at least 8 months prior to the DEROS and ask you to submit a Request for Personnel Action (RPA) to begin the advance recruitment process. This allows our office sufficient time to recruit and allows the selectee sufficient time to process for an overseas move. Our office conducts all "local" recruitment. Positions covered by a Career Program are handled by the designated Career Program at the Air Force Personnel Center and all "internal" certificates and DoD wide or Federal wide (outside of the commuting area) recruitment are handled by the Regional Personnel Center at Sembach -- expect longer recruitment timeframes.

## **Equal Employment Opportunity**

We've all seen the statement on job opportunity bulletins, "All qualified applicants will receive consideration without regard to political affiliation, marital status, sex, age, non-disqualifying physical or mental disability, national origin, or any other non-merit factors." Air Force managers and supervisors are held responsible and accountable for upholding the principles of equal opportunity in all decisions regarding the personnel management process. It is Air Force policy that all personnel management decisions are free from discrimination and ensures equal opportunity for all applicants and employees.

## **Special Emphasis Program (SEP)**

Each Air Force installation has a program called the Special Emphasis Program (SEP) that addresses the unique and special concerns of minority, women, and disabled employees. Each SEP has a special manager (SEPM) assigned to help develop and administer their SEP. The SEPMs are appointed to work with the Chief of Affirmative Employment, Civilian Personnel Flight. We are currently seeking interested individuals who, on a collateral duty basis (approximately 20% of their duty time) will spend time working their respective SEP programs and take an active part working on one or more of the various ethnic observance sub committees throughout the year.

Managers are needed for the following programs:

- Black Employment Program (BEPM)
- People with Disabilities Employment Program (PDEP)
- Asian American/Pacific Islander Employment Program (AA/PIEP)
- American Indian/Alaskan Native Employment Program (AI/ANEP)

Managers should release employees, on duty time, to serve on SEP committees and to participate in SEP sponsored activities. If you are interested in serving as a Manager or on one of the committees, please contact Ms. Diana Hendrix, at 480-7055.

## **Virtual Career Brief**

Air Force has recently developed an on-line virtual career brief which is available to US civilian employees through the Air Force Personnel Center (AFPC) Secure website at <https://www.afpc.randolph.af.mil/afpcsecure/default.asp>. The new application is located along with other automated civilian personnel processes such as the employee benefits information system (EBIS) and is identified as *Civ Career Brief - Virtual Career Brief for AF Appropriated Civilian Employees*.

The virtual career brief contains all the information "real time" found on the standard career brief that now must be requested through the Civilian Personnel Flight. The following categories of information are located on the on-line career brief: Current Position Data, Certification/Language Proficiencies, Appointment Information, Pay/Benefits, Overseas, Special Placement, Career Program, Experience Current, Experience History, Education, Training, Awards, Appraisals, and Acquisition (if applicable). *The information contained in the virtual career brief may be printed using the "landscape" mode.*

After reviewing your records, if you find any information, i.e., awards, training, education, or experience, missing or you feel it is incorrect, go to <http://www.ramstein.af.mil/86mss/cpo/newcpo/staffing/SUPPQUAL.doc>. Print, fill out, and submit this form to your servicing specialist with any supporting documentation, as necessary.

Questions regarding awards should be directed to Employee/Management Relations at 480-2008, training and education should be directed to Training at 480-2167, and work experience should be directed to Affirmative Employment at 480-7055.

Employees who are unable to access the brief may request a copy by sending an e-mail to the 86 MSS/DPCS Inbox or calling DSN 480-7055.

## **2-Year Limit on Temporary Positions**

An organization may make a temporary limited appointment to fill a short-term position (i.e., one not expected to last longer than 1 year). The supervisor of each position filled by temporary appointment must certify that the employment need is truly temporary and that the proposed appointment meets the regulatory time limits – a maximum of 24 months. An agency may make the initial temporary appointment for up to 1 year and extend for an additional 1 year.

It is important for supervisors to understand that this 2-year limitation is based in Title 5 Code of Federal Regulations, Part 316.401. Any extension beyond the 2 years is in direct violation of that regulation. The Civilian Personnel Flight does not have the authority to grant an extension. Extensions beyond the 2-year maximum, which must be approved by the Office of Personnel Management, may be requested when necessitated by major reorganizations, base closure or other unusual circumstances.

It is also important to understand that the establishment of another temporary position which involves the same basic duties, in the same major subdivision of the agency and same local commuting area as the original position/appointment is considered an extension of the original position/appointment, and, therefore, would violate the maximum 2-year time limit.



Supervisors need to be proactive in determining staffing needs of a temporary nature and plan according to the time limits established. If it is anticipated up front that the temporary need will be longer than 2 years, contact your Classification and Staffing representatives to discuss other options.

## Electronic Official Personnel Folders

### What is the Electronic OPF?

It is an "electronic filing cabinet" where the employee's Electronic Official Personnel Folder (OPF) is stored. As a Federal employee, OPFs are maintained to document personnel actions and other pertinent personnel information throughout your career.

### Content of Electronic OPF:

All documents created for actions effective on or after 1 October 1996 are filed in both an image or an electronically created data file in the Personnel Automated Records Information System (PARIS). This Electronic OPF is available for viewing and/or printing at your local workstation or Civilian Personnel Flight (CPF). If you were hired into Federal service after 1 October 1996, you will have a completely Electronic OPF. If, however, you were on the Federal roles prior to 1 October 1996, the Regional Personnel Center (RPC) at Sembach maintains the paper OPF, which existed at the time of transition, along with its electronic version.

**The following documents are stored in your electronic OPF, regardless of the effective date:**

1. SF-2809 - Health Benefits Registration Form (FEHB). This will be the most recent form indicating current enrollment or declination of coverage.
2. SF-2810 - Notice of Change in Health Benefits Form. This will be the most recent form that transfers in the current enrollment code, if applicable.
3. SF-2817 - Life Insurance Election (FEGLI). This will be the most recent form showing current election to enroll or waive FEGLI coverage.
4. SF-2822 - Request for Insurance (FEGLI)
5. SF-2823 - Designation of Beneficiary (FEGLI)
6. SF-3102 - Designation of Beneficiary (FERS)
7. TSP-1 Thrift Savings Plan Election Form. This will be the most recent form showing current election.
8. DD-214 - Report of Military Discharge
9. SF/OPM 813 - Verification of a Military Retiree's Service in Non-Wartime Campaigns or Expeditions



10. SF-144 - Statement of Prior Service or the latest SCD computation
11. Certificate of Investigation
12. SF-171/OF-61/Resume Most recent

**The following temporary memo/form letters are also scanned, if available.**

13. Notification of Requirement for Drug Testing
14. Letter of Reprimand (if it is still within the suspense period for retention)
15. Notification of Requirement to Serve Supervisory Probationary Period

You, the RPC, and your CPF can view OPF documents simultaneously. (This means that more than one person can look at a specific document at a time)

**Location of Your Hard Copy OPF:**

OPFs for civilian employees serviced by the Ramstein Civilian Personnel Flight are maintained at the RPC.

## **Printing copy of SF50, Notification of Personnel Action**

Go to AFPC Homepage: <http://www.afpc.randolph.af.mil/>

Double click on "Electronic Personnel Folder" next to "Civilian Personnel"

On the next screen, double click on "EOPF". If you need to set up your PC, follow the instructions after clicking on "Setup Page".

Current employees, who have established a USERID and Password, can type those in and click on "Secure Login" (right hand side of screen). New users will have to follow instructions in "Create Password Accounts Here".

After successful login, you will reach the secure sites. Click on "Civilian Electronic OPF". This will take you to the EOPF Documents. Double click on the SF50 you want to review/print. The SF50 will show up as a Formflow document.

**MAKE A COPY FOR YOUR SUPERVISOR TO ANNOTATE AND/OR PLACE IN YOUR FOLDER.**

## *Employee / Management Relations*

### **ALTERNATE DISPUTE RESOLUTION**

Did you know that the Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR) program helps to achieve productive solutions when workplace disputes arise? “ADR” refers to a variety of voluntary approaches to resolve conflict in lieu of traditional adjudication or adversarial approaches. Rather than attempting to create winners and losers, ADR emphasizes cooperation in identifying mutual interests and developing creative solutions.

Mediation is the primary ADR method used. In this approach the parties engage in structured discussions about the dispute, with the help of a neutral mediator. The mediator is not a judge or jury, but rather a skilled facilitator. The only binding resolutions from mediation are those the parties mutually agree to uphold to solve the problem. Such agreements are normally finalized in writing. Several trained and certified mediators are available locally to provide this service when needed. Regardless of the outcome, mediators are required by law to keep information presented during a mediation session confidential.

ADR is proven to reduce time, money and discord compared to formal complaint processes such as the grievance procedure or the Equal Employment Opportunity complaint system, but it does not replace those processes. Employees have the right to use formal complaint systems where applicable. When ADR is unsuccessful, traditional adjudication may be the only avenue to settle the dispute. Employees must be mindful of the time for filing complaints under formal complaint systems even if they are first seeking a resolution through ADR. ADR is not an excuse for missing filing deadlines. Failure to file a complaint within the time limits normally results in rejection of the complaint. In contrast, ADR can be attempted at virtually any stage of a formal complaint process – although it is generally most successful in the early stages of a dispute.

Advice and assistance regarding mediation may be obtained by contacting your Employee Relations Specialist, Ramstein AB, DSN 480-4213/2019 or the ADR Program Office at 480-2250.

### **EMERGENCY DATA SYSTEMS (EMDS) FOR NEXT OF KIN (NOK)**

In a recent article printed in the Kaiserslautern American and in events reported through the various news media we are reminded of the importance for current next-of-kin information to ensure we provide family members accurate and timely information about civilian as well as military Air Force members involved in an accident or an attack. It is very important that we are able to locate and notify family members as quickly as possible after a casualty or injury. The urgency for an online emergency data system became even more apparent when supervisor’s records on civilian employees could not be retrieved for NOK information after the attack on the Pentagon.

Employees can now provide emergency information through the use of their computer at work or from the comfort of their own home by accessing the Emergency Data System at

<http://www.afpc.randolph.af.mil/emds/> . Some employees in the past may have had some difficulty in entering their information due to older browsers or option settings. You will find a “Fix for Corrupted Data” which you can now click on at the above site and resolve that problem. Also, please note that on your EMDS form there is a remarks area, which will allow you to enter information concerning family members with medical conditions to assist Casualty Officers. In addition, for those of us in the overseas area, include a stateside and overseas NOK. Ensure that you include your local address as well as your mailing address.

This will only take about 15 minutes of your time and it will mean so much to your loved ones. Make a copy of the form and provide it to your immediate supervisor to retain in their Supervisor Employee Work Folder. If you need assistance or have questions concerning the Emergency Data System or Next-Of-Kin notification you may call your Employee Relations Specialist at 480-2008.

## **FSA – FLEXIBLE SPENDING ACCOUNT**

We have all been seeing it but what is it? A Flexible Spending Account is an employee benefit that allows you to set aside money, on a pre-tax basis, for certain kinds of common expenses. With an FSA, you can reduce your taxes while paying for services you'd have to pay for anyway.

The Federal FSA Program offers two accounts.

- The Health Care Flexible Spending Account (HCFSA) for health care expenses not paid by your Federal Employees Health Benefits or any other insurance.
- The Dependent Care Flexible Spending Account (DCFSA) for dependent care expenses that allow you (and your spouse, if married) to work or look for work, or that allow your spouse to attend school full-time.

So what expenses are covered?

- Under HCFSA – eligible expenses for you, your spouse, and anyone you claim as a dependent on your federal income tax return.
- Under DCFSA – eligible expenses that allow you and your spouse to work, look for work, or attend school full-time. Eligible dependents include:
  - Dependent children under age 13 and/or
  - A person of any age whom you claim as a dependent on your federal income tax return and who is mentally or physically incapable of caring for himself or herself.

Okay so you are interested, how does it work?

- First, you'll need to determine how much money to allot on an annual basis and make your election(s) with SHPS. For the HCFSA, you can set aside up to \$3,000, and for the DCFSA, you can contribute up to \$5,000 for the Plan Year.
- Second, SHPS request your payroll office to deduct equal installments of the annual allotment you elect and they deposit it into your account.
- Third, when you incur an eligible expense, you'll pay for it out of your pocket and then submit a claim for reimbursement to SHPS. All claims must be accompanied by the appropriate documentation, such as an itemized receipt or an explanation of benefits.

- Finally, SHPS process claims and issues reimbursement.

Who or what is SHPS and what do they do? SHPS, Inc. is one of the nation's largest FSA administrators, they assume full responsibilities for the day-to-day administration of the programs which includes:

- Managing the enrollment process via the web: [www.fsafeds.com](http://www.fsafeds.com) or toll-free call to 1-877-372-3337 or from Germany by dialing 99 from DSN line, then 0-800-2255-288 then 877-372-3337;
- Answering questions during and after Open Season periods concerning your account, how to enroll, what is an eligible expense, etc.

Some Facts to know:

- The next Open Season for FSA enrollment will be the same as our Federal Employees Health Benefit (FEHB) Program – 10 Nov through 8 Dec 2003.
- Although FSA & FEHB has the same open season and FEHB premiums can be paid from pre-tax money, FEHB premium conversion continues automatically once elected from one year to the next. Unlike premium conversion, participation in an FSA is not automatic; employees must make a voluntary election on an annual basis. Employees who do not make an election during the annual open season will not have an FSA in the new plan year.
- Money left in an account at the end of a plan year is forfeited and cannot be rolled over into the following year. Therefore, you might want to designate only enough money to cover regular and predictable expenses so that you are not faced with forfeiture.
- Some employees may choose to join for a year in which they expect to have a one-time major expense not covered by health insurance, such as certain dental procedures, and then drop out for the following year. The minimum investment in either type of accounts is \$250 per plan year.

For more information, go to [www.fsafeds.com](http://www.fsafeds.com) or speak with an SHPS customer service representative by calling the toll-free number 1-877-372-3337 or from Germany by dialing 99 from DSN line, then 0-800-2255-288 then 877-372-3337.

## **GOVERNMENT CHARGE CARD DISCIPLINARY ACTION POLICY FOR CIVILIAN EMPLOYEES**

1. Department of Defense (DoD) Government Charge Card Disciplinary Guide for US Civilian Employees has been implemented and Air Force offenses and remedies for appropriated funded employees are stated below. Public Laws and the FY 03 National Defense Authorization Act require our disciplinary and adverse action policy address appropriate actions for employees who misuse their government purchase and travel charge cards. Accordingly, commanders and supervisors must be: (1) informed on the potential misuses and abuses of government charge cards and their responsibilities to have suspected misuses and abuses appropriately investigated, and (2) trained on appropriate corrective or disciplinary/adverse actions.

2. It continues to be DoD policy that improper, fraudulent, abusive, or negligent use of a government charge card is prohibited. This includes any use of government charge cards at

establishments or for purposes that are inconsistent with the official business of DoD or with applicable regulations. The charges provided have been added to AFI 36-704, Discipline and Adverse Actions, Attachment 3, Guide to Disciplinary Actions, 22 Jul 94, for immediate use. Please note that supervisors retain the authority to counsel or to give their employee an oral admonishment if deemed appropriate. As information, the review of the security clearance of an individual involved in credit card misuse or abuse is not a disciplinary action and should not be treated as such.

3. The DoD documents related to this subject will be retained on the following website: <http://www.ramstein.af.mil/86mss/cpo> as information. Questions and assistance concerning the disciplinary action policy should be referred to your Employee Relations Specialist, 86 MSS/DPCE at 480-2008.

Cause of Action (Offense)	Typical Penalty		
	First Offense	Second Offense	Third Offense
31a. Misuse of Government Travel Charge Card (e.g., use of charge card for unauthorized personal expenses).	Reprimand to removal	5-day suspension to removal	10-day suspension to removal
31b. Failure to Pay Government Travel Charge Card Bill (e.g., failure to pay charge card bill or pay such bill in a timely manner).	Reprimand to removal	5-day suspension to removal	10-day suspension to removal
31c. Unauthorized use of or failure to appropriately control use of Government Purchase Charge Card as a cardholder, approving official responsible for use or oversight of the Card.	Reprimand to removal	14-day suspension to removal	30-day suspension to removal

## HOME LEAVE

Employees recruited in the United States for overseas employment with their own travel and transportation entitlement may accumulate 45 days maximum annual leave. Such employees also earn and accrue home leave. The earning rate depends on whether a post differential is authorized at the overseas duty post. For example, employees assigned to duty posts where no differential is paid, earn 5 days during each 12-month period; at posts where a 10% differential is paid, employees earn 10 days of home leave for each 12 months service abroad. Home leave can be taken in the United States only. For the initial grant of home leave, an employee must complete a basic service period of 24 months regardless of the length of the tour of duty for travel and transportation. Thereafter, home leave may be taken whenever the employee desires with supervisory approval. The 24 months of continuous service abroad is a one-time requirement IAW DOD manual 1400.25-M, subchapter 1260.

Employees serving on a subsequent tour overseas who did not use all their accrued home leave on a previous tour will have a "bank" of home leave available. The approval to use

“banked” home leave for humanitarian or compassionate reasons is delegated to Installation Commanders. Employees should submit requests to use “banked” home leave through the servicing Civilian Personnel Flight (CPF) to the Installation Commander who will review requests on a case-by-case basis. All other requests by employees to use “banked” home leave must be submitted through the servicing CPF to HQ USAF/DPCP. Complete rationale must be submitted with the request, and the request will be considered on a case-by-case basis. POC: Ms. Susanne Lombard/Ms. Christiane Goede, DSN 480-5774.

## **MANDATORY PERFORMANCE FEEDBACK**

Effective and timely feedback, which addresses employee’s performance on elements and standards, is an essential component of a successful performance management program. Employees should receive information about how they are doing in as timely a fashion as possible. If they need to improve their performance, the sooner they find out about it, the sooner they can correct the problem. If employees have reached or exceeded a goal, the sooner they receive positive feedback, the more rewarding it is to them.

AFI 36-1001 dated 1 July 1999, Managing the Civilian Performance Program, requires the rating official and civilian employee to meet at the beginning of each appraisal period (April) to discuss the employee’s approved performance elements and standards which is called certification. The Core Personnel Document or Position Description, whichever is applicable, should be signed by the rater, reviewer, and employee. In addition, at least one progress review is mandatory at the midpoint (September-October) of the performance cycle and is documented on AF Form 860B, Civilian Progress Review Worksheet. Nothing prevents you from providing more than one feedback per rating period. Communication between a supervisor and their employees is “key” to meeting our mission requirements.

Give feedback in a manner that will best help improve performance. The process is intended for employee development and to help the individual. Since people respond better to information presented in a positive way, express feedback in a positive manner. This is not to say that information should be sugar-coated. Present accurate, factual, and complete feedback; it is more effective when it reinforces what the employee did right and then identifies what the employee needs to do in the future. Constant criticism eventually falls on deaf ears.

## **CIVILIAN RECORDS RETENTION IN SUPPORT OF CLASS ACTION LAWSUIT**

Important Notice for USAF Civilian Supervisors

Are you a supervisor of a US Air Force civilian appropriated fund employee? Do you handle records pertaining to US Air Force civilian employees? You should be interested to know that HQ USAF/JA and HQ USAF/DP have issued a directive that requires documents/records dealing with the management of Air Force civilians be retained until a date to be determined. The directive was put into place because of a class action lawsuit alleging discrimination based on race, sex, and age. The directive does not apply to Non-appropriated funded or local national employee records.

The type of records this action covers includes any and all documents, papers, reports, notes, memoranda, e-mails or other material – hard copy, electronic, final copy and drafts dealing



with the management and supervision of civilians. This includes perpetual and transitory type files. Additionally, records already in staging or due for destruction are included. The main points of interest at the unit level are in documents dealing with the supervisory record, appraisals, awards, and other employment actions.

The specific civilian records subject matter areas of concern as identified by HQ USAF/ JA and HQ USAF/DP memo, dated 17 May 2003, are listed below:

- All performance appraisals, periodic performance reviews (or feedback) and any reports concerning appraisals and their distributions
- All "971files" and documents therein (do not purge any documents therein)
- All merit promotion files including all certificates, interview notes, staff summary sheets, and any materials or other documents regarding candidate's qualifications or selection, and any reports concerning promotions and their distributions, or any other documents of any sort regarding "under representation" of any group and any other documents relating to same
- All files and matters relating to disciplinary actions
- All files and matters relating to RIFs
- All performance award documentation (cash and time-off awards) and any reports concerning performance awards and their distributions
- Employee lists (name lists)
- Affirmative employment/action activities or documents (includes policies, briefings, status reports), accomplishment reports, staffing recommendations (if any), and any communication from or to affirmative employment staff regarding appraisal, promotion, hiring, or bonus decisions, and any communication or document referring to "under-representation" of a group defined by race and/or gender (sex)
- Spreadsheets, databases, or other data storage means, in both electronic and any hard copy form pertaining to the above list

Records that fit the above category must be retained regardless of the original disposition. When applicable records meet their normal eligibility for destruction, the records must be handled according to instructions provided by the Civilian Personnel Flight or transferred to the Base Records Staging facility (through your Base Records Advisor, 786 CS/SCSIR). The Civilian Personnel Flight has incorporated procedures into civilian out-processing which requires the turnover of the AF Form 971 and Employee Performance Files (generally all a part of the Supervisor's Employee Work Folder) to 86 MSS/DPCE. Employees may obtain a copy of Out-processing Instructions and Checklist from 86 MSS/DPCS, Ramstein Air Base, building 2120, Room 125.

The Civilian Personnel Flight will also collect and maintain documents on employment selection -- all interview notes and any matrices or other related documents regarding candidate's qualifications, consideration, and selection/non-selection for vacancies -- and awards -- all performance documentation, cash and time-off awards, and any reports concerning performance awards and their distributions. Documents/records pertaining to interview and selection of employees should be forwarded to 86 MSS/DPCS, US Affirmative Employment office, Unit 3220 Box 365, APO AE 09094 or contact them at DSN 480-7055. Documents/records pertaining to performance awards should be forwarded to 86 MSS/DPCE, Employee Management Relations, Unit 3220 Box 365, APO AE 09094 or contact them at DSN 480-2008.



Any records removed from an individual personnel file or other file maintaining records on civilian personnel must be placed in a parallel file and marked: "For the Purpose of Class Action: Destruction Authority: FROZEN – Subject to Possible Litigation Action Effective April 2003." Perpetual records, those having retentions of, destroy when no longer needed, or destroy when superseded, obsolete or no longer needed, must be maintained and are authorized for storage in the staging facility managed by the Ramstein Air Base Records Management office, based upon volume and storage requirements.

If you have any questions or concerns on the retention or disposition of civilian records, please contact your unit Records Custodian or Functional Area Records Manager. If you need further guidance, feel free to contact the Base Records Management office, 786 CS/SCSIR, DSN 489-6979.

Submitted by: 786 CS/SCSI, Base Information and Web Management

## **HOW TO SUBMIT ELECTIONS TO MAKE REGULAR TSP CONTRIBUTIONS**

The next Thrift Savings Plan Open season will be 15 October through 31 December 2003. Air Force-serviced employees will submit elections to contribute, change the amount of contributions, or terminate contributions electronically through the Employee Benefits Information System (EBIS) web application or the Benefits and Entitlements Service Team (BEST) automated telephone system. Hard copy election forms will not be accepted. Once you complete an election in EBIS or the BEST phone system, you can change it as many times as you like until it becomes effective. Once it becomes effective, you cannot make another TSP election even if the TSP open season is still in effect. EBIS is a secure web program. As a result, before you can access EBIS you must log into the AFPC Secure Web via UserID and password. To get started, go to [www.afpc.randolph.af.mil/dpc/BEST\\_GRB/EBIS.htm](http://www.afpc.randolph.af.mil/dpc/BEST_GRB/EBIS.htm), or click on the EBIS link provided on the BEST Homepage. Once within EBIS, you'll enter your social security number (SSN) and BEST personal identification number (PIN) -- another method of ensuring the security of your personal records and benefits transactions. Your BEST PIN is the same for both EBIS and the BEST phone system. Detailed information on how to access EBIS is contained in the BEST brochure "[How to Access the Benefits and Entitlements Web Automated System.](#)"

The EBIS system is also used, if you want to elect or chance your health insurance or to waive the life insurance.

For further assistance you can contact Ms. Marina Kappler or Ms. Ollie Wilson at DSN: 480-4212, [Marina.Kappler@ramstein.af.mil](mailto:Marina.Kappler@ramstein.af.mil) or [Ollie.Wilson@ramstein.af.mil](mailto:Ollie.Wilson@ramstein.af.mil), your POCs at the Civilian Personnel Office, EMR section.

## **TSP "CATCH-UP" CONTRIBUTIONS**

The Thrift Savings Plan Catch-Up Contribution Enrollment is available for employees currently investing in TSP at the maximum percentage rate allowed (FERS -13% and CSRS - 8% or at a rate that would bring them to the IRS-set dollar limit of \$12,000) and are 50 years old or older this year. "Catch-up" contributions can be made toward their accounts, starting with up to \$2,000 this year. The good news is that enrollment begins 25 Aug 03. And remember, catch-up contribution enrollment is not tied to open seasons the way regular TSP

contributions are. Therefore, after 25 Aug 03 you may submit elections at any time to start, stop, or restart catch-up contributions, or to change the amount of your contribution. Enrollments submitted 25 Aug through 6 Sep 03 will be effective 7 Sep 03, with the deduction taking place on pay date 26 Sep 03. Elections submitted on or after 7 Sep 03 will be effective at the beginning of the following pay period.

Although some employees apparently plan to make catch-up contributions in only a few pay periods, others apparently intend to spread the investments out over the remainder of the year. In that case, special care must be taken; those employees should check exactly when the deductions would begin and how many more pay periods they will have during the year. In particular, the TSP has said, investors should remember that the last pay period of the year extends into calendar year 2004, but any catch-up election will cut off at the end of the current calendar year, possibly cutting off the investments before the employees have put in the full desired amounts. Catch-up elections do not carry over from one year to the next. New elections must be filed each calendar year, and any amount invested below the maximum this year cannot be made up next year. The system will check that you are currently making regular TSP contributions; that you are age 50 in the year you submit your election; and that you are covered under either the Federal Employees Retirement System (FERS) or the Civil Service Retirement System (CSRS). However, BEST is not responsible for checking if you are contributing the maximum possible percentage to regular TSP or an amount that will result in reaching the IRS annual elective deferral limit by the end of the year. Employees who falsely certify they meet this requirement will have to deal with the IRS at the end of the year.

At this time it appears the web-based Employee Benefits Information System (EBIS) will not be ready to accept catch-up enrollments; however you may enroll through the BEST phone automated system. **To use the BEST phone system**, from Germany dial 99 from DSN line, then 0800 2255 288 for AT & T access followed by 800 997 2378. If located in a country other than Germany you will need the AT & T access code for that country. The access code can be found at: [http://www.att.com/international\\_business/dialing\\_guide/country-diallist.cgi](http://www.att.com/international_business/dialing_guide/country-diallist.cgi). When the phone system answers, press “2” for benefits and entitlements, then “1” for current Air Force-serviced employees. The system will then prompt you to enter your Social Security Number (SSN) and Personal Identification Number (PIN).

Employees should check the BEST website at: <http://www.afpc.randolph.af.mil/dpc/BEST/tsp-page.htm> for current and additional information on the TSP “Catch-up” Contribution Program.

## USE OR LOSE LEAVE

All supervisors and employees are reminded that the leave year ends 10 January 2004. Supervisors should verify the established leave schedules not later than 30 August to ensure that all employees are given a reasonable opportunity for a vacation and use any leave they would otherwise forfeit at the end of the leave year. In order to prevent forfeiture of “use or lose” annual leave you must have scheduled or rescheduled canceled leave prior to the close of business on Saturday, 29 November 2003. When employees choose not to request or use annual leave to avoid forfeiture, they are not entitled to have forfeited leave restored for later use.

## *Classification*

### **CERTIFYING POSITION DESCRIPTION ACCURACY**

A position description/core personnel document (PD/CPD) is a statement of the major duties and responsibilities performed by an employee and the supervisory relationships in a position. Because it serves as the official record of the classification of the job and is used as a foundation to make many personnel decisions, a clear and accurate written record of a position is essential to position classification. Supervisors are required to sign the following statement that is found on every PD/CPD coversheet:

“SUPERVISOR’S CERTIFICATION: I certify that this CPD is an accurate statement of the major duties, knowledges, skills and abilities, responsibilities, physical and performance requirements of this position and its organizational relationships. The position is necessary to carry out government functions for which I am responsible. This certification is made with the knowledge that this information is to be used for statutory purposes relating to appointment and payment of public funds and that false or misleading statements may constitute violations of such statutes or their implementing regulations.”

A CPD is essentially a pay document. When a supervisor signs the CPD, he/she is certifying that those duties and responsibilities are or will be performed. The position classification specialist, based upon careful analysis, allocates a grade to those duties. This places a dollar value on those certified duties. When a supervisor signs a time card he/she certifies that those duties at that grade level were performed for a certain number of hours. This authorizes payment to the employee through the disbursement of public funds. In essence, falsely certifying a CPD is no different than falsely certifying any other pay document, such as a travel voucher.

#### **THE SUPERVISOR'S ROLE IN POSITION CLASSIFICATION**

What follows are a few tips on your responsibilities in position classification:

**DON'T PROMISE A PROMOTION:** Beware of promising an employee a promotion before you have a classified position which the employee MAY be promoted to. Wait until the position is properly classified to avoid any problems, and even then you should not promise a particular person the promotion.

**HOW TO HANDLE POSITION AUDITS:** Have all the facts ready before the classifier comes to see you. Try analyzing the duties yourself to determine the difficulties and responsibilities of the job. Be sure the classifier understands these features; he or she will need all the information you can provide. This information and the OPM classification guides help the classifier in determining if the position warrants upgrading, downgrading, or if it should remain as it is.

**REQUEST FOR POSITION REVIEWS:** Unless there are substantial grounds for a change in a position description, i.e., change in mission, etc., which is the basis for the change, please do not attempt to reward or retain employees by attempting to upgrade the position. Consider rewarding employees through the incentive awards programs that are available to you. The classifier cannot consider such things as: how much private industry pays; how efficient, loyal, or understanding the employee is; how much work he/she does; etc. The classifier looks at the difficulties and responsibilities of the work itself.

**KEEP THE CLASSIFIER INFORMED:** Since pay is determined by grades, please report any substantial changes in the duties and responsibilities of the job, including percentages of time, so that the employee who is performing those duties can be properly credited. If you feel or know the position description does not accurately describe the work performed, call on the classifier assigned to your organization for assistance in preparing a more accurate position description. (DPCC/8-3844)